

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3583

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR TANCREDE, FLA., ON

JULY 21, 1954

SUMMARY

Date: July 21, 1954

Railroad: Atlantic Coast Line

Location: Tancrede, Fla.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: Extra 183 North : Second 589

Engine numbers: Diesel-electric units 183 and 179 : Diesel-electric unit 189

Consists: 26 cars, caboose : Caboose

Estimated speeds: 5 m. p. h. : 10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 2° curve; 0.12 percent ascending grade northward

Weather: Clear

Time: 6 a. m.

Casualties: 6 injured

Cause: Inferior train occupying main track on time of opposing superior train, without protection

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3583

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

August 25, 1954

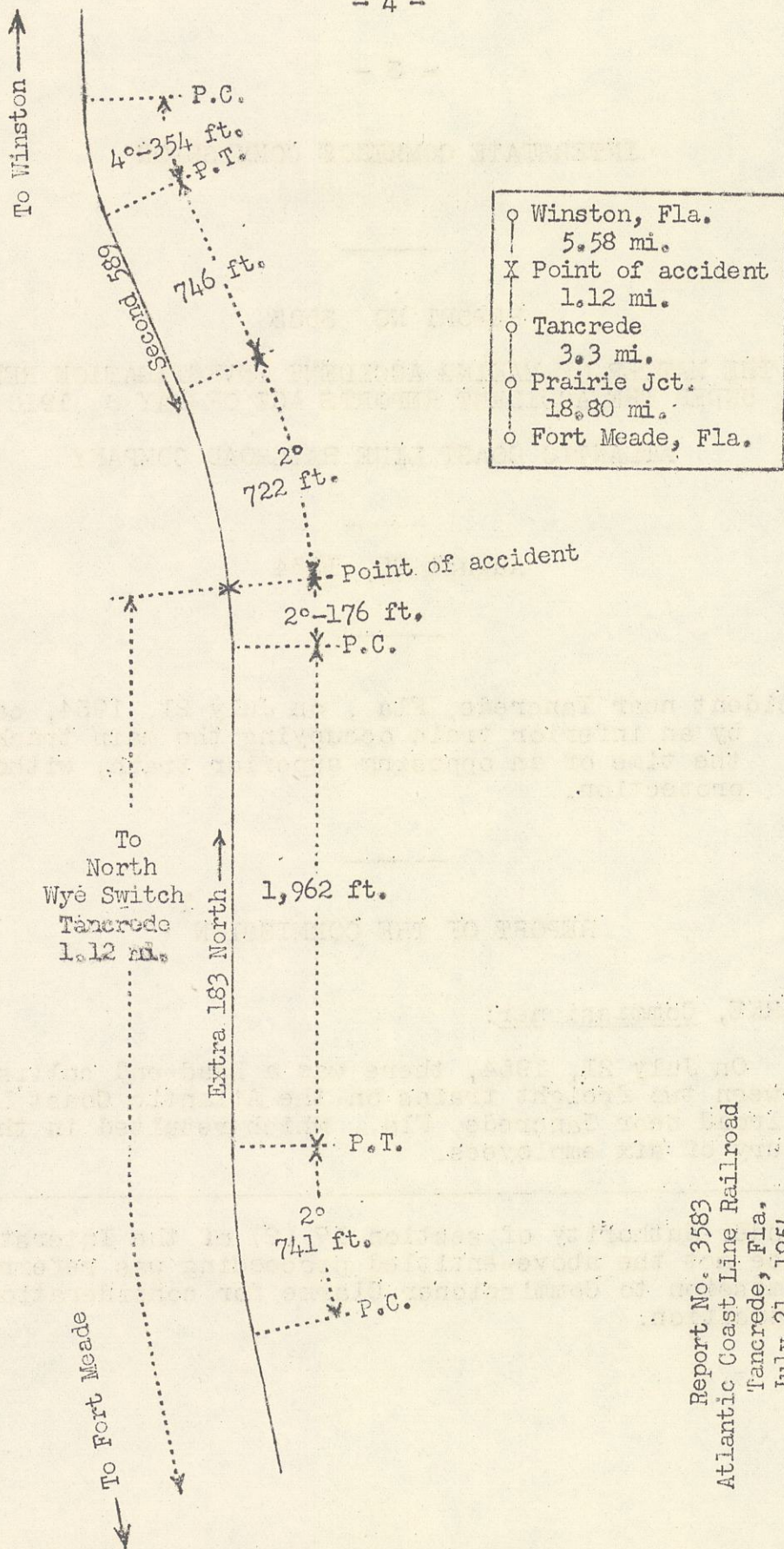
Accident near Tancrede, Fla., on July 21, 1954, caused
by an inferior train occupying the main track on
the time of an opposing superior train, without
protection.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On July 21, 1954, there was a head-end collision
between two freight trains on the Atlantic Coast Line
Railroad near Tancrede, Fla., which resulted in the
injury of six employees.

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Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the
Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and
disposition.



Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern Division designated as the Bone Valley Branch, which extends between Fort Meade and Winston, Fla., 28.8 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Tancrede, 22.1 miles north of Fort Meade, a wye connects the main track with a line 6.44 miles in length which diverges eastward. Movements over the diverging line, which is designated as Ridgewood Spur, are made under the rules for movements within yard limits and without train orders. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 1.12 miles north of the north wye switch. From the south there are, in succession, a 2° curve to the right 741 feet, a tangent 1,962 feet, and a 2° curve to the left 176 feet to the point of accident and 722 feet northward. From the north there are, in succession, a 4° curve to the left 354 feet, a tangent 746 feet, and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.12 percent ascending northward at the point of accident.

At Tancrede, telephones for communication with the train dispatcher are located adjacent to Ridgewood Spur at a point 1,471 feet east of the north wye switch, and on the west side of the main track at a point 236 feet south of that switch. A train register is located in the telephone booth adjacent to the main track.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

Train Register.--A book or form which may be used at designated stations for registering signals displayed, the time of arrival and departure of trains, and such other information as may be prescribed.

Register Station.--A station at which train register is located.

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

S-83. A train must not leave its initial station on any district, or sub-district, or a junction * * * until it has been ascertained whether all superior trains due have arrived or left.

83-A. Register stations will be designated by time-table.

At initial stations, conductor and engineman must examine the train register, sign their names and fill in the required information. * * *

At other register stations, the conductor must examine the train register and enter the required information, unless otherwise provided. If all superior trains due have arrived or left, the conductor will personally notify the engineman.

* * *

85. * * * Extra trains may * * * run ahead of * * * third * * * class * * * trains. * * *

S-87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains by not less than five minutes, unless otherwise provided * * *

99. * * *

When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must immediately go back with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection * * *

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way, when necessary, by the fireman or head brakeman.

* * *

Timetable special instructions read in part as follows:

* * * Trains will report clear at Tancrede when working Ridgewood Spur and will call dispatcher before fouling main line on return from Ridgewood.

REGISTER STATIONS

Tancrede for southbound trains.

* * * Winston for Branch trains.

Operators when on duty will register trains as follows:

* * * Winston, Branch trains.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 30 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 183 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 183 and 179, coupled in multiple-unit control, 26 cars, and a caboose. This train arrived at Tancrede from Ridgewood Spur about 5:45 a. m. Before entering Ridgewood Spur the crew had made a south-bound trip from Winston to Tancrede, and at Winston they had received, among others, copies of train order No. 517 reading in part as follows:

* * *

ENG 183 RUN EXTRA WINSTON TO NORTH WYE SWITCH TANCREDE
AND RETURN TO WINSTON

and copies of train order No. 519 reading in part as follows:

* * *

THIRD 589 ENG UNKNOWN WAIT AT WINSTON UNTIL 6 45 AM

Soon after Extra 183 North arrived at Tancrede from Ridgewood Spur it entered the main track at the north wye switch, and while moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it collided with Second 589 at a point 1.12 miles north of the switch.

Second 589, a south-bound third-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 189 and a caboose. This train departed from Winston at 5:40 a. m., 8 hours 40 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it collided with Extra 183 North.

The front wheels of the rear truck of the locomotive of Second 589 were derailed. The first Diesel-electric unit of the locomotive of Extra 183 North was somewhat damaged, and the second Diesel-electric unit was slightly damaged. The locomotive of Second 589 was somewhat damaged, and the caboose was slightly damaged.

The front brakeman of Extra 183 North, and the engineer, the fireman, the conductor, the front brakeman, and the flagman of Second 589 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 16.6 trains.

Discussion

Under the rules of this carrier a train must not leave its initial station on any district or sub-district until it has been ascertained whether all superior trains due have arrived or left. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains, and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by rule No. 99. Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than 5 minutes unless otherwise provided. Two or more sections may be run on the same schedule. Each section has equal timetable authority. Timetable special instructions require the crews of trains from Ridgewood Spur to communicate with the train dispatcher before entering the main track at Tancrede.

On the day of the accident the crew of locomotive 183 reported for duty at Lakeland, 4.1 miles north of Winston, at 2:30 a. m. On the southward trip their train was operated by signal indications between Lakeland and Winston. As the train passed Winston, members of the crew received among others, copies of train orders Nos. 517 and 519. These train orders authorized engine 183 to run extra Winston to North Wye Switch Tancrede and return to Winston and instructed Third 589 to wait at Winston until 6:45 a. m. All members of the crew had read and understood these train orders. The conductor said that before leaving Lakeland he learned that two south-bound freight trains operating via Winston and the Bone Valley Branch

had preceded his train from that station. South-bound trains frequently operate as sections of No. 589 from Winston, and he gained the erroneous impression that both of these trains would operate as sections of that schedule. Extra trains are permitted to run ahead of third-class trains, and consequently when Extra 183 South entered the Bone Valley Branch at Winston it did not stop and neither the conductor nor the engineer examined the train register in order to ascertain whether No. 589, or any sections of that schedule, had departed from that station.

Extra 183 South cleared the main track at Tancrede at 4:14 a. m. The conductor reported his arrival to the train dispatcher and entered the information on the train register. He said he observed at this time that First 589 was not registered. Switching service was performed on Ridgewood Spur, and a train was assembled for northward movement. This train then proceeded to Tancrede and stopped in the vicinity of the telephone located adjacent to the spur. The conductor proceeded to the telephone and made several attempts to communicate with the train dispatcher. He said that during this time he heard the operator at Winston attempting to make a train report to the dispatcher, but the dispatcher did not answer and the train was not identified. The conductor then returned to the locomotive, and the train proceeded to the clearance point at the north wye switch. The conductor proceeded to the telephone booth and examined the train register. Because of previous difficulty with the telephone at this point he did not attempt to communicate with the dispatcher. He said he observed that neither First nor Second 589 was registered. However, before he examined the register he had been under the impression that First and Second 589 had preceded Extra 183 South from Winston to Tancrede, and when he returned to the locomotive he continued to retain the impression that these trains had passed. He informed the enginemen that there was sufficient time to proceed to Winston to clear Third 589, but he did not mention the preceding sections of that schedule. The engineer said that the conductor on returning from the east telephone had replied in the affirmative when asked if all had gone. He assumed from this that the conductor had ascertained that all superior trains due, except Third 589, had arrived and left. The members of the crew on the locomotive did not question the conductor concerning First and Second 589 after he examined the train register, and when he returned to the locomotive the train entered the main track and proceeded northward.

The conductor said that on previous occasions he had been unable to communicate with the train dispatcher from Tancrede. When this occurred, provided all superior trains due had arrived, he had proceeded to Winston and reported the occurrence from that point.

As Extra 183 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 24 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device. The engineer and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The conductor was in the control compartment of the rear unit of the locomotive, and the flagman was in the caboose. The headlight was lighted. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. Because of track curvature and vegetation adjacent to the track the view of the track ahead from the control compartment of a locomotive approaching the point of accident from either direction is materially restricted. The fireman observed the locomotive of the opposing train at a distance of approximately 1,300 feet. He called a warning, and the engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. All members of the crew on the locomotive except the conductor alighted before the accident occurred. The conductor estimated that the speed of the train was reduced to 4 or 5 miles per hour at the point of collision.

As Second 589 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 38 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device. The engineers were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the control compartment of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in the caboose. The headlight was lighted, and signals were displayed for a following section. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. No train order restricting the movement of Second 589 with respect to Extra 183 North had been issued. The engineer said that he first observed Extra 183 North approaching at a distance of about 1,200 feet. He said that he immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. He estimated that the speed of the train was reduced to approximately 8 or 10 miles per hour before the collision occurred.

The investigation disclosed that on the day of the accident First 589 preceded Extra 183 South from Winston to Tancrede, and members of the crew of First 589 were instructed by train order, as was common practice, that it was not necessary to register at Tancrede. The train dispatcher said that since Extra 183 North could not, under the rules, leave Tancrede until after Second 589 had arrived, this train order was issued to avoid delay to First 589 at that station. He said that he received a telephone call from the yardmaster at Tampa at approximately the time that Extra 183 North reached Tancrede, and until after the accident occurred he was not aware that the conductor of Extra 183 North had attempted to communicate with him.

Preparations are now being made for the installation of a traffic-control system on the line on which this accident occurred. This system will extend between Winston and Prairie Jct., 10 miles south of Winston. It is expected that the installation will be completed within the next few months.

Cause

This accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train, without protection.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of August, 1954.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,

Secretary.

